

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

FELIPE MUJICA

We Are More United to the Invisible Than to the Visible

Felipe Mujica, *Unitidul (Ei) Quiso*, 2013. Fabric and sewing, 4 panels of 200 x 120 cm each.
Installation view, Fondazione Merz, Turin



FELIPE MUJICA

We Are More United to the Invisible Than to the Visible

October 10 to November 12, 2018

The Foundry

Felipe Mujica. We Are More United to the Invisible Than to the Visible is a solo exhibition of the New York-based Chilean artist Felipe Mujica that takes place in the Medellín Museum of Modern Art's Foundry Gallery and focuses on his curtains. These fabric pieces (usually embroidered, sewn, perforated or altered by other means) are a line of work that Mujica has developed for over ten years, often in collaboration with his partner Johanna Unzueta or with different groups of embroiderers and sewers from the places where he produces them.

The domestic connotation of the term and collaborative aspect in making the curtains are essential for a broader understanding of Mujica's work. These qualities are visible not only in his artistic production, but also in his curatorial and managerial projects in which affection, friendship and the sense of intimacy play an important role. The case of the *Galería Chilena* is particularly significant in this story: it is a commercial space without a set location (founded and managed by artists Diego Fernández, Felipe Mujica and Joe Villablanca), which moved around Santiago de Chile in the late 1990s presenting exhibitions in diverse venues.

The curtains, which besides being artworks in their own right are also part of an exercise in organizing the exhibition space, have a direct precedent: the paintings on commercially-available wooden panels made by Mujica for a collective exhibition in 2005 that served as museographic elements in the show (*Sunrise and Fall*). This duplicity in the identity of the curtains reflects, in turn, the dual role that Mujica has played in art as both an artist and an organizer and, in general, a tendency toward ambiguity understood as the possibility of assuming different roles within the same context. The reason for the transition from the panel to fabric was also twofold: on the one hand, it freed the artist from the impracticality of the rigid, heavy boards that are difficult to ship and handle, and on the other, it made the material - the work - something softer, closer, that seemed to breathe.

The first curtain was part of the only video installation in Mujica's career (*Galería Metropolitana*, Santiago de Chile, 2006). The presentation took place in the hot and sunny month of March and the artist needed an element to darken the room in which the video was installed without turning it into a typical black box. This gave rise to RGB—in reference to the video component of the installation—as well as to the dual nature of the works. Fragility, permeability, lightness, presence, manual workmanship and a domestic dimension are all characteristics of these works and play a role in their symbolic, as well as in the functional aspect.

Mujica often refers to the particular materiality of the objects and to the fact that they are in a constant state of motion: the panels—which became flexible—*breathe* in and with the space in response to any change in the conditions of the place in which they are installed, such as a variation in the air circulation or a viewer passing nearby. The motion places the work in a constant state of crisis by changing the perspective from which it is viewed and constantly modifying the spatial relationship with visitors. This mutability recalls the intrinsic variation of one of his early works, *Tetris* (1996), in which Mujica changed the arrangement of six monochrome squares on the wall of a classroom in weekly presentations. On the other hand, because the curtains are flat but tend to be hung in space (instead of on or against a wall), they acquire a dual personality: as two-dimensional surfaces—as if they were paintings—, but with motion in at least two dimensions, as if they were an object.

This exhibition brings together works from several of the sets of curtains that Mujica has produced since 2006 and are exhibited by "families". The designs of each series are inspired by themes close to the artist, or by the work of other artists belonging to the historical avant-gardes such as Alexander Rodchenko and Paul Klee, amongst others. Together, they give an account of his research around geometric abstraction and its history, as well as a sensitivity to poetry and a metaphysical exploration of the world. The works from series such as *No State*, *No State II*, *No Dream* and *Untitled (Paul Klee)* arise from this interest in art historical subjects.

The title of the exhibition arises from a quote by the German romantic poet and philosopher Novalis who, among other things, is known for *Liebesreligion* or Religion of Love. In it, the author argues that the relationship between self and not-self (that is to say, between self and universe) is similar to that of two lovers, and that the ultimate state of the human soul is of total love for the universe. The correspondence with the emotional and human aspects of Mujica's practice is not coincidental.

After *RGB*, over two hundred curtains have been produced, usually grouped according to the occasion for which they were made. One of the most recent sets is titled *Las universidades desconocidas* (The Unknown Universities, 2016), and consists of thirty curtains made for the 32nd Sao Paulo Biennial that Mujica produced half in a shared workshop-office in the *Galería Metrópole* and the other half with the Embroiderers of the Conception Garden (*Bordadeiras do Jardim Conceição*). The curtains functioned as separators, banners or flags announcing, for instance, the presence of an artistic gesture in one of the main spaces of the Biennial, and also as individual semantic and symbolic elements.

Untitled (El Quisco) (2013), also present in the exhibition, is a set of four curtains suspended at two parallel heights that rely on the interaction of the viewer, the artist himself, the curator, or the person responsible for the space, to propose a compositional dynamic that is not determined in advance, but varies depending on the will of the people who interact with the work. The curtains expand or elaborated on a rhomboid composition that allows people to move one or all the pieces in order to generate an almost endless number of variations.

More recently, while continuing to delve into geometric abstraction, the designs have made a turn toward linear patterns due to the fact that the curtains are now, in their vast majority, embroidered by hand. This linear nature has produced series (*La tierra pone en equilibrio los extremos* [The Earth Balances the Extremes], *Una noche de verdad dentro de una noche de verano* [A Real Night Within a Summer Night], *Sin título* [Untitled], etc.) whose applications are closer to writing: the designs suggest hieroglyphs, characters, *picbação* (writing similar to graffiti), or alphabets that could be ancestral, indigenous, alien, from space, or from the future.

Mujica has produced around 27 families and several other individual curtains, turning them into his most representative body of work. By depriving them of their practical function, this exhibition highlights the formal aspect and the close, even intimate relationship generated between viewers and the curtain when they perceive, approach, move along, go around or touch it. *Felipe Mujica. We Are More United to the Invisible Than to the Visible* focuses on the relationships between individuals, between the viewer and the work of art, and between people and the universe, suggesting a state of interest and love for the other that ultimately allows us to join the invisible.



Felipe Mujica, *Ya no quedan países exóticos en Latinoamérica* (There Are No Exotic Countries Left in Latin America), 2018. Fabric, sewing and hand embroidery: Dimensions variable, 20 panels 140 x 200 to 159 x 240 cm each. Installation view, Röda Sten Konsthall, Götterburg

Support provided by:



GOBIERNO
DE COLOMBIA



MINCULTURA

Programa Nacional de Concertación Cultural



Acknowledgements: Hotel Viaggio Medellín, Pintuco

Carrera 44 # 19A - 100 Ciudad del Río. Medellín - Colombia / Phone: (4) 444 26 22 / www.elmamm.org

